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30

MUSLIM VIEW OF HINDU CULTURE

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In order to study the Muslim view of Hindu Culture it is necessary at the very outset to have a clear grasp of the meaning of culture. Unfortunately though the word 'culture' is often used it is something very complicated and difficult to understand. The difficulty is increased by the fact that eminent scholars have expressed widely different views on the subject. Without going into this discussion I may state as follows the sense in which I have used it. The culture is the sumtotal of those features in a society which distinguish it from another and which may be regarded as its essential characteristics inasmuch as in spite of changes and modifications they do not change beyond recognition. These features consittute the culture which an eminent authority has defined as "the expression of our nature in our modes of living and of thinking in our everyday intercourse, in art, in literature, in religion, in recreation and enjoyment." It is, ho-wever, necessary to point out that different elements in this list are specially emphasized by different cultures and by the same culture at different times. Both Hindu and Islamic culture, for instance, during the period under review (A.D. 1200-1800) laid special emphasis on religious and social ideas and institutions. Both of these again had some basic factors which formed the essence of culture in each, everything else being deemed to be secondary or subsidiary and consequently of far less importance in forming a fair estimate of both these cultures. This important point must always be kept in view in the discussion that follows.

Having given some idea of the meaning of 'culture', we may proceed to discuss the term 'Hindu'. Strange as it may seem, this very familiar racial, religious, and national designation was unknown to the forefathers of the people who now call themselves Hindus, before the Muslim conquerors settled in India. The term 'Hindu' is derived from 'Sindhu', the name of the mighty river in the Punjab. When the Iranians or Persians first came into contact with this region they called the country on the banks of this river as well as the people dwelling therein by the name of this river, namely, Sindhu. But as they pronounced *sa* as *ha* (as some of the people of Bāngla-desh do even today), the name Sindhu became Hindu. But as some other foreigners who borrowed this name usually omitted the initial *ha* sound,

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the name assumed the form 'Indu' and, by further process of evolution, has been changed to Inde, Indika, and finally India. The Muslim invaders of India adopted the name 'Hindu', which was then unknown to the people of this country, like the other foreign names mentioned above.

Many other foreign peoples like the Greeks, the Śakes, the Parthians and the Kuṣāṇas had conquered parts of India before the Muslims, but they never applied any of the foreign names to the country after they had settled here. For they regarded themselves as part and parcel of the local population and ere long merged themselves into it without leaving any trace of their foreign origin, far less any separate or distinct entity. But the Muslim conquerors who settled in India kept themselves severely aloof from the local people whom they regarded as belonging to a distinct cultural unit. For, with the exception of a microscopic minority, the peoples of India had so many common elements in their culture that a foreigner might well regard them as forming a single cultural unit, more or less in the same way as the Muslim conquerors themselves, belonging to different racial groups and regions in Asia, formed one cultural unit under the banner of Islam. The Muslim conquerors regarded their culture as far superior to, and radically different from, that of the local people conquered by them, and felt the necessity of a clear demarcation between the two. So the Muslims called the conquered people by the foreign name 'Hindu' to which they were accustomed. The constant use of this name by the authorities gradually made the conquered people also to accept it as a designation for themselves and their religion and culture. In the course of time, the sons of Bhārata, who called themselves Ārya, accepted the new designation and ere long felt proud of using the name Hindu as we today, forgetful of its origin, feel proud of the name Hindu as that of a people, nation, and their religion and culture. Thus the culture prevailing in Bhārata till the beginning of the 13th century A.D. may be designated as the Hindu culture, a term which by long usage has got a connotation far beyond its original significance.

We may now proceed to disuss the view of the Muslim conquerors about the Hindu culture which forms the subject-matter of this paper. As mentioned above, the religion formed the essential element of the culture of both the Hindus and Muslims. So far as this aspect of Hindu culture is concerned we may form a very definite idea of the Muslim view about it. Islam enjoined upon its followers, irrespective of their racial or territorial origin, a set of definite and categorical principles or religious tenets which they all implicitly obeyed. In accordance with these the Hindu or, for the

matter of that, any non-Muslim, religion had no place in a State ruled by the Muslims. The ideal aim was to exterminate or convert them to Islam, but according to some moderate schools of thought their existence was tolerated only to use them as hewers of wood and drawers of water, so to say. This is sufficient to indicate and explain the utter contempt with which the Muslims looked upon the Hindu religion which found expression in specific injunctions laid down by the Caliph 'Umar which the Muslim rulers were required to impose upon their Hindu subjects. The first of these obligatory injunctions prevented the Hindus from building a temple for their deities, the fundamental and the most essential element of Hindu religion, like forbidding a Muslim to build a mosque. In practice we find that the breaking of the images of Hindu gods and the desecration or destruction of their temples, sometimes supplying materials for building of mosques in their sites, formed regular practices of Muslim rulers. Muhammad bin Qāsim, who conquered Sindh at the beginning of the 8th century, set the example and it was piously followed by Alivardi Khan who died one year before the battle of Plassey which marks the beginning of British rule in India and the end of Muslim supremacy in India.

Thus so far as the Muslim view of Hindu religion or its fundamental principles were concerned there was not any essential difference between the Muslim rulers belonging to the various races—Arab, Turk, Afghan and Mughal. This is because all of them followed the principles of Islam though some stretched their meanings either towards leniency or towards greater severity. Such uniformity cannot be expected in regard to their view on other aspects of Hindu Culture. For a man's understanding of another culture depends to a large extent upon his own culture. So far as the Muslim view of some other aspects of the Hindu culture is concerned we find a high appreciation on the part of the Arabs and Iranians who posessed a developed culture but the same thing cannot be said of the Afghans, Turks and Mongol hordes who ruled India as they were mostly rude and unlettered. Besides the Arab and Iranian Muslims dominated over only a small strip of territory in India which served as a good basis for close and intimate contact with Hindu culture but without creating that spirit of arrogance which characterises the attitude of the conquerors of a large country towards the conquered people. The Arabs viewed the Indians from a distance through their literary and scientific achievements while the later Muslim races ruled over nearly the whole of India and settled there among the people whom they conquered so easily and despised as infidels.

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Hence it is necessary to discuss separately the view of Hindu culture entertained by the Arabs and other Muslim conquerors. The Muslims of Arabia had a great veneration for Hindu culture from the time they came into direct contact with it by the conquest of Sindh. Although the political authority of the Arabs in their Indian domains comprising Sindh and Multan was always a precarious one still we find a close cultural contact between the two through the intermediary officials and embassies that passed from Sindh to the Court of the Caliph who still exercised authority over the rulers of Sindh.

Baghdad in modern Iran was the seat of the Caliph and the culture of Muslim world during the first two centuries of Muslim occupation of Sindh and Indian culture flowed to it both directly as well as through Iran. The direct intercourse between India and Baghdad is prominently noticeable in the second half of the eighth century A.D. Several embassies from Sindh came to the court of Baghadad during this period and a number of Indian scholars accompanied these embassies bringing with them several works on mathematics including the *Brahma-sphuṭa-siddhānta* and the *Khaṇḍa-khādyaka* of Brahmagupta. With their help these works were translated into Arabic by Arab scholars (Alfazari, perhaps also, Yakub Ibn Tarik) and it was thus that the Arabs first became acquainted with a scientific system of astronomy. Both the works exercised a profound influence on the development of astronomy by the Arabs who learned from Brahmagupta earlier than from Ptolemy. It is probably also through these scholars that the Hindu numberals were first introduced among the Arabs.

The Ministers of Harun Al-Rashid (786-809 A.D.) induced Indian scholars to come to Baghdad and engaged them to translate into Arabic Sanskrit books on medicine, pharmacology, toxicology, philosophy, astronomy, astrology, algebra, arithmetic and other subjects. Arab scholars were also sent to India in large numbers to learn those sciences at firsthand from Indian authorities.

The Arab works mention a number of such treatises which were thus translated, as well as the name of a number of Indian scholars who visited Baghdad. Some books were at first translated into Persian and later from Persian into Arabic. The most famous of these was the *Kalila and Dimna*, based on the Hindu book of fables known as *Pañcatantra*. All these indicate the high esteem in which the Hindu culture was held by the Arabs. The Arabs highly valued the medical science of the Hindus. They not only had the Hindu standard treatises on this subject translated into Arabic, but made some Hindus Chief Physicians of their hospital.

The intercourse between the Hindus and the Muslim Caliphs of Baghdad ceased as soon as the latter lost their hold upon Sindh towards the close of the 9th century A.D. Nevertheless the tradition was carried by the independent smaller Muslim States that arose in the Eastern dominion of the Caliphate. The Samanid kingdom, nearest to India, maintained close relations with the Hindus of Kabul, Punjab and Sindh. It was in this eastern region that Alberuni was born in A.D. 973 in the territory corresponding to modern Khiva. He was a Councilor of the local ruler, and was carried away as a prisoner of war when Khiva was conquered by Mahmud of Ghazni in 1017. He stayed in Ghazni, and revived the Arabic tradition of interest in the study of Hindu culture. He emjoyed the reputation of being a great astrologer and astronomer and probably enjoyed some roya favour, but there is nothing to show that he was ever in the service of the State or Court of Sultan Mahumud. But it was during this enforced exile that he wrote the most comprehensive account of Indian culture that was ever composed by a foreigner. It is a strange coincidence that at the very moment when Mahmud was carrying fire and sword and massacring the Hindus and demolishing their temples Alberuni was patiently collecting the information about India. Like India, his own country was also conquered by Sultān Mahmud, and this community of misfortune perhaps made him sympathetic to the Hindus. In any case, the Hindus and thir culture had a paramount interest for him. There is no doubt that he spent a long time in different parts of India, but in what capacity is not known. It has been suggested that he was carried there as a hostage of political prisoners kept on honourable terms, and he utilised this period in the study of India. He keenly felt that whatever had been written till then about the Hindus was based upon secondary information without any critical examination. At the suggestion of a friend who shared this view he wrote a big book on India. It is not possible to give an idea of the contents of this book, but it will suffice to say that it deals with nearly all the important aspecsts of Hindu culture—its religion, philosophy, literature (both religious and secular), science, social system etc.

Alberuni was the last and the best Muslim scholar to carry on the Arabic tradition of a sympathetic understanding and assessment of Hindu culture. He represents the period of transition which ushered in the age of

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Turkish conquerors and rulers of India. As such his book represents the Muslim view of Hindu culture at its best. It is necessary, therefore, to note very briefly what he thought of the Hindus and their culture. To Alberuni the Hindus were excellent philosophers and good mathematicians and astronomers. He felt a strong inclination towards Indian philosophy. He believed that originally the Hindus and the Greeks, like the Muslims, were pure monotheists, worshipping one sole almighty God, and has discussed at length how idolatry arose. "The first cause of idolatry was the desire of commemorating the dead and of consoling the living; but on this basis it has developed, and has finally become a foul and pernicious abuse" (p. xviii).[1]

Dr. Sachau, who translated Alberuni's work, observes; "He seems to have revelled in the pure theories of the *Bhagavadgītā*, and it deserves to be noticed that he twice mentions the saying of Vyāsa, "Learn twenty-five (i.e. the elements of existence) by distinctions, & c. Afterwards adhere to whatever religion you like; your end will be salvation" (I. 44, and also I. 104). In one case he even goes so far as to speak of Hindu scholars as "*enjoying the help of God,*" which to a Muslim means as much as *inspired by God, guided by divine inspiration* (II. 108). These words are an addition of the author's in his paraphrase of the *Bṛhatsaṁhitā* of Varāhamihira, v. 8. There can be scarcely any doubt that Muslims of later times would have found fault with him for going to such length in his interest for those heathenish doctrines." (p. xviii)

But Alberuni was a thorough-going Muslim. "He sometimes takes an occasion for pointing out to the reader the superiority of Islam over Brahmanic India. He contrasts the democratic equality of men with the castes of India, the matrimonial law of Islam with degraded forms of it in India, the cleanliness and decency of Muslims with filthy customs of the Hindus" (Alberuni, p. xix). But Alberuni was not a bigot or blind admirer of Arab civilization. He reproaches the Arab Muslims for having destroyed the Iranian civilization which, in his opinion, was in no way inferior to that of the Arabs. Similarly, whenever he speaks of a dark side in Hindu life, he at once turns round sharply to compare the manners of the ancient Arabs, and to declare that they were quite as bad, if not worse.

[1] The figure within brackets refers to the number of page in the English translation of Alberuni—*Alberuni's India*—by Dr. Edward C. Sachau (hereafter referred to as Alberuni).

The age which produced a Muslim Indologist like Alberuni passed away in India. The close contact with the Hindus made them realize the fundamental differences between the Hindus and Muslims, and this, combined with the superiority complex natural to a conquering race, made them look down upon the Hindus. Henceforth there was a radical change in the Muslim view about the Hindus and their culture.

Alberuni had also noticed these differences, but in spite of these his learning and liberalism made him a great admirer of Hindu culture. The rude and ignorant Turks did not possess this saving grace and hence began a new phase in the Muslim assessment of Hindu culture.

It did not take Alberuni long to discover the fundamental differences between the Muslims and Hindus of his time. "The Hindus", he said, "entirely differ from us in every respect". He then discusses the different causes which separate the Muslims and the Hindus. The first was the Sanskrit language, so difficult for the Muslims to master. Next come religion and social usages. As the views expressed by Alberuni in this respect have been repeated by other Muslims down to our own time, the passage may be quoted in full: "They totally differ from us in religion, as we believe in nothing in which they believe, and *vice verse*. On the whole, there is very little disputing about theological topics among themselves; at the utmost, they fight with words, but they will never stake their soul or body or their property on religious controversy. On the contrary, all their fanaticism is directed against those who do not belong to them—against all foreigners. They call them *mleccha*, i.e., impure, and forbid having any connection with them, be it by intermarriage or any other kind of relationship, or by sitting, eating, and d inking with them, because thereby, they think, they would be polluted. They consider as impure anything which touches the fire and the water of a foreigner; and no household can exist without these two elements. Besides, they never desire that a thing which once has been polluted should be purified and thus recovered, as, under ordinary circumstances, if anybody or anything has become unclean, he or it would strive to regain the state of purity. They are not allowed to receive anybody who does not belong to them, even if he wished it, or was inclined to their religion. This, too, renders any connection with them quite impossible, and consitutes the widest gulf between us and them.

"In the third place, in all manners and usages they differ from us to such a degree as to frighten their children with us with our dress and our ways and customs and as to declare us to be devil's breed and our doings as the very opposite of all that is good and proper". (pp. 19-20).

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Alberuni mentions two other circumstances contributing to the ill-feeling between the Hindus and the Muslims. The first is the devastation of Indian territories by the Muslim conquerors. He refers to the conquest of Sindh by Muhammad 'ibn Quasim and the repeated incursions into India by Mahmud of Ghazni, and observes; "The repugnance of the Hindus against foreigners increased more and more when the Muslims began to make their inroads into their country. Mahmud utterly ruined the prosperity of the country and the Hindus became like atoms of dust scattered in all directions....."Their scattered remains cherish, of course, the most inveterate aversion towards all Muslims" (pp. 21-2).

Lastly, Alberuni sharply criticises the vanity and self-delusion of the Hindus in the following words: "The Hindus believe that there is no country but theirs, no nation like theirs, no kings like theirs, no religion like theirs, no science like theirs. They are haughty, foolishly vain, self-conceited, and stolid. They are by nature niggardly in communicating that which they know, and they take the greatest possible care to withhold it from men of another caste among their own people, still much more, of course, from any foreigner. According to their belief, there is no other country on earth but theirs, no other race of man but theirs, and no created beings besides them have any knowledge or science whatsoever. Their haughtiness is such that, if you tell them of any science or scholar in Khurasan and Persis, they will think you to be both an ignoramus and a liar. If they travelled and mixed with other nations, they would soon change their mind, for their ancestors were not as narrow-minded as the present generation is." (pp. 22-3).

We have no evidence to show that any Muslim scholar after Alberuni appreciated the good points in Hindu culture mentioned by him. But the bad points, particularly the idolatry and the social exclusiveness, are stressed by subsequent writers Ziauddin Barani bitterly denounced the Hindus for their worship of idols and cow-dung His contemporary foreign traveller, Ibn Batutah has given a lurid picture of the social bigotry of the Hindus from his own personal experience, and contrasts it with the infidels of Ceylon. He mentions that in Ceylon the infidels respected the Muslim fakirs, gave them shelter in their houses, and fed them, but the infidels in India did neither" Then he continues: "Occasionally we were compelled to ask some of the infidels of India to cook meat for us. They used to bring it in their own cooking pots and to sit at a little distance from us: they used to bring also leaves of banana tree upon which they placed rice—their

principal food—pouring over the rice broth called *koshān* and subsequently they withdrew. Then we used to eat it, and whatever remained would be eaten by the dogs and birds. If any innocent child happened to take anything from that remnant they would beat him and compel him to eat cow's dung which according to their belief purifies". (p. xxxiv).[1]

But Ibn Batutah had even worse experience once being surprised by a band of infidels on the road he narrowly escaped with his life and hid himself. What follows is thus described: "On the seventh day I arrived in the vicinity of a thickly populated village of infidels, where there was a water pond and green plantations. I begged of them something to eat, but they refused to give anything." (p. 156).

The absence of all social intercourse was emphasized by the segregation of the two communities not only in villages but even in citites. This is indicated by Ibn Batuta. "In India the infidels occupy one continuous piece of land and inhabit regions which are adjacent to those of the Muslims. The Muslims dominate the infidels" (p. 124). Reference is made to Parwan as "a small city of Musalmans lying in the midst of the territories of the infidels" (p. 163). In the capital city of a Hindu state in Malabar coast, "there are about four thousand Muslims, who inhabit a suburb of their own inside the jurisdiction of the city. There is fighting between them and the inhabitants of the city often" (p. 185). Ibn Batuta's narrative shows that such communal fights were by no means rare. In another city on the Malabar coast "there were three Muslim quarters" (p. 188). "When the Muslim Sultān of Hinawar coquered the Hindu city of Goa, he occupied the Hindu palace and gave the adjacent quarters to his followers, while ten thousand Hindu prisoners were removed to a suburb" (p. 196).

The segregation of the Muslim community was rendered necessary, at least to a large extent, by the social rules and habits of the Hindus who regarded the Muslims as unclean and impure (*mlecchas*). The Hindus maintained no social intercourse with the other community by way of interdining and intermarriage. They were uncompromising in this respect, and regarded the touch of Muslims, or even a scent of their food, as pollution. Ibn Batuta keenly felt all this when he passed through the Hindu States of Malabar, where Muslims were few and far between. He justly complains that no Hindu would give a vessel to a Muslim for drinking water of a well

[1] The page reference is to the English translation of the *Rehla of Ibn Batuta* by Dr. Mahdi Husain (hereafter referred to as Ibn Batuta).

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as he would do to another Hindu. "If one happens to be a Muslim he (Hindu) pours water into his (Muslim's) hands and leaves off when the latter makes him a sign or withdraws. It is the custom among the heathens in the Malabar country that no Muslim should enter their houses or use their vessels for eating purposes. If a Muslim is fed out of their vessels, they either break the vessels, or give them away to the Musalmans" (p. 182).

Ibn Batuta further observes: "We used to meet infidels on this road at night: but as soon as they saw us they got out of the way until we had passed. The Muslims are the most respected people in this country except that, as before mentioned, the natives do not dine with them and do not admit them into their houses" (p. 183).

Anyone who reads Ibn Batuta's account would conclude that the social exclusiveness and segregation between the two communities was as rigid as in the days of Alberuni. And it is, therefore, hardly a matter of surprise that in spite of his long residence in India from 1333 to 1347 and wide travel all over the country he has nothing to say in his big book of the Hindus and their culture, except their hatred and aloofness from the Muslims.

As a matter of fact we have no reliable record, even of subsequent times, to form a definite idea of the Muslim view of Hindu Culture. The *Sufī* sect undoubtedly held the Hindu culture in high esteem. But the *Sufīs* were not reckoned as orthodox Muslims. Besides, their number was very few and their tenets cannot be looked upon as an indication of the attitude of the Muslims in general. Akbar and Dārā held the Hindu culture in esteem and were denounced for that reason by their co-religionists. But Jahāngīr who came to the throne after Akbar, and Aurangzīb, who usurped the throne legitimately belonging to Dārā, had no high esteem for the Hindus. There is only a single passage in the autobiography of Jahāngīr in which he expresses his views on the Hindu religion. It runs as follows: "One day I observed to some learned Hindus that if the foundation of their religion rested upon their belief in the ten incarnate gods, it was entirely absurd'.....After a long discourse, they at last admitted that there was a God who had no corporeal form, and of whom they had no definite notion. They said that as to understand that singular and invisible Being was beyond their comprehension, they could not form any idea of Him but by the means of some natural objects, and therefore they

had made these ten figures the medium of raising their minds up to the Supreme God" (Memoirs, p. 45).

Perhaps this is the first written record after Alberuni's book in which we find the exposition of an orthodox Muslim's view about Hindu religion. It is no doubt a noticeable fact that after three hundred years of Turkish and Afghan rule the Muslim rulers of a different stock, the Mughals, began to take some interest in Hindu religion and philosophy. But the records of the Mughul rulers leave no doubt that the anti-Hindu liberalism of Akbar and Dārā were mere passing phases and Jahāngīr, Shāhjahān and Aurangzīb triumphed over them.

Having so far discussed the direct evidence regarding the Muslim view of Hindu culture we may now turn to the indirect evidence. This is furnished by the conscious or unconscious absorption of Hindu elements by the Muslim society in India. For adoption or adaptation is a sure indication of esteem and appreciation.

So far as religion is concerned, the Muslims in general never adopted any item of Hindu beliefs or practices. Only the *Sufīs*, a monastic order of Islam, based on the mystic interpretation of religion, was undoubtedly influenced by the Indian philosophy. The idea of passing away into universal being is believed to have been derived from the doctrine of Vedānta. Some other religious beliefs and practices of the *Sufīs* and other monastic orders are ascribed by some to Buddhism, *Yoga* system and other forms of Hinduism. Muslim authors wrote books describing Hindu method of meditation and Buddhist ideas of Nirvāṇa while Dārā Sukoh's *Majma-ul-Bahrain* makes an attempt to trace the similarity between the trends of Islam and Hinduism.

Another point of contact was furnished by the Muslim and Hindu saints, each having disciples of the other community and both being revered by large number in each community. The common worship of Satyapīr is a striking instance of this aspect. The Muslims, specially of lower order, joined the Vairāgī sect. But no Hindu, howsoever great was his regard for a Muslim saint, would drink or eat anything touched by him.

A great deal has been made of the fact that a number of these saints, particularly Rāmānanda, Caitanya, Kabīr and Nānak, made earnest efforts to reconcile Hinduism and Islam, by stressing the essential truths of religion common between the two and discarding the beliefs and rituals which separated them. As a proof of their success it is mentioned that both

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Hindus and Muslims became their disciples. But what was after all the practical effect of all this? What percentage of the people of this vast country really possessed or gave any indication of that spirit of harmony between Hinduism and Islam which it was the aim of these saints to foster? How far did it affect even the thoughts and ideas of the intelligentsia? What permanent trace of communal amity have their teachings bequeathed to posterity? Nānak achieved the greatest success in attracting both Hindus and Muslims to his liberal and cosmopolitan religion. Yet in succeeding ages his followers, the Sikhs, cherished the bitterest hatred towards the Muslims, and the two were sworn enemies of each other.

The reason is not far to seek. The type of harmony between Hindusim and Islam preached by Kabīr, Nānak and others exerted very little influence upon the Hindu orthodoxy. Nor did it affect the Muslim rulers and the people. This may be illustrated by one incident. A Brahman named Laudhan had one day asserted before the Musalmans that both Islam and his own religion were true. Objection was taken to it and the poor Brahman was tried by a learned assembly of Muslim containing "all the wise men of note from every quarter". After investigating the matter, the Ulama determined that he should be imprisoned or converted to Islam, or suffer death and since the Brahman refused to apostatise he was accordingly put to death by the decree of the Ulama. The Sultān, after rewarding the learned casuists, gave them permission to depart."[1]

The study of Hindu literature, both religious and secular, may be cited as another point of contact. The *Atharva Veda*, the *Gītā*, the Upanishads, the Epics and stories thereof, *Harivaṁśa*, *Yogavāsiṣṭha*, *Bhāgavata* and several Purāṇas, books of general interest, such as *Hitopadeśa*, *Vatiris Simhāsana*, *Kathā Sarit Sāgara*, as well as numerous treatises on Mathematics, Astronomy, Medicine, Veterinary science including treatment of elephants, and various booksof pseudo-scientific character such as astrology, palmistry, horoscopy etc., were translated from Sanskrit into Arabic or Persian. Some original books on Hindu subjects were written in Persian. There are Persian versions of Sanskrit and Hindi poems describing the different parts of human figure and an Arabic treatise on Sanskrit rhetoric. Many Muslim rulers and even their officers patronized Hindu writers, and some Muslims wrote original works in Indian vernaulars. Malik Muhammad Jaysi's *Padmāvati* being a well-known example of the latter. There was

[1] Elliot and Dowson, *History of India as told by its own Historians*, Vol. III, p. 440.

also a kind of linguistic fusion as evidenced by long list of Hindī words in Persian works and the growth of Urdu which has Perso-Arabic vocabulary but Hindī grammatical forms. Some front rank writers in Hindi were Muslims. Some Muslim writers in Hindi begin their books with obeisance of Hindu gods, such as Gaṇeśa, Rāma and Sarasvatī. One Muslim author invokes the blessings of Gaṇeśa, Sarasvatī, Kṛṣṇa, Rādhā and Śrī Śaṅkara while another makes obeisance to the saint Rāmānuja. By the time of the Mughuls the cults of Rāma and Kṛṣṇa had already entered into Muslim poetry. "In the province of Thatta (Sindh), Multan and specially at Banaras the Brahmins used to teach the tenets of their religion in their established schools and admirers and students both Hindu and Muslim flocked to them from great distance".[1] But it is difficult to form an estimate of the number of Muslim students who benefited from such study and were allowed to do so with impunity. Such stray references, opposed to well authenticated views and statements do not carry much weight.

The adoption of many Hindu social customs has been stressed by many writers. Small groups of converted Muslims retained their old Hindu customs, including marriage ceremony and rules of succession. The Hindu social divisions into castes is reflected in such divisions in the Muslim society as Sayyid, Shaikh, Mughul or Pāṭhān. The Rājputs, Jāt, and Jahirs for the most part retained their identity on embracing Islam. The assumptions of the title Sayyid by the Brahman converts was approved by Akbar while converts from the lower caste Hindus or outcastes were called Non-Muslims and had an inferior status to begin with. "The practice of taking out a man from his bed before he breathes his last was also common among Muslims. The shaving of head, beard and moustaches on the death of a near relation by men was introduced by Akbar and it got some currency with the Muslims."[2]

Some aristocratic Muslim families of Hindu origin are said to have followed the Hindu customs of *Satī* and *Jauhar*, and Muslim widows in imitation of the Hindus gave up wearing ornaments and coloured clothes. Some popular rituals in Hindu marriage ceremony were in vogue among the Muslims. The Muslims not only adopted Hindu customs in birth and

[1] Dr. Muhammad Yasin, *A Social History of Islamic India* (1605-1748), (hereafter referred to as Yasin), p. 89.

[2] Ibid, pp. 90-91. For the statements in the next para, cf. pp. 90, 66, 18 and 58 of the same book.

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marriage festivities but also took part in merry and joyous Hindu festivals like Holi and Hindola decorations. Decorations, illuminations, fireworks, splendid processions, abundant display of gold, silver, pearls, diamonds and jewels by Muhammadans in India, unheared of in their native lands, were the natural consequences of their contact with Hindu culture. "Humāyūn adopted the *tulā-dān*, or the weighing ceremony of the Hindus. Akbar went further and associated *Holi*, *Dasehra* and *Vasant* with court celebrations, Jahāngīr and, to a certain extent, Shāhjahān continued the noble tradition."[1] It is held by some that the Muharram festival drew some of its features from the Hindus. The *Taziyas* which are not found in any other Islamic country show a striking resemblance to the Jagannāth Car. The burning of the Taziyas and mimic attacks on effigies were probably drawn from *Rāmlīlā*. Certain new festivals like *Shabibarat* came to be celebrated all over the country. Some have suggested that it was copied from the Hindu festival of *Śivarātri*, night vigil and fire-works being common to both.[2]

The Hindu games and sports also exerted some influence. Jahāngīr is said to have a horoscope cast for everyone of his children while the Mulslim nobility calculated auspicious days according to the Hindu system.[3] The employment of Hindus in high offices is looked upon as a mark of appreciation of Hindu culture. Hindus were taken in both civil and military service, from the very beginning, but until the advent of the Muhguls, Hindus were seldom appointed to senior posts. Since then Hindus occupied even the posts of Governors and Commanders of armies. But it is only very occasionally that a Hindu financer or a Hindu General came to the top rank and whenever they did, great was the discontent among the Musalmans. In any case, the conspicuousness of such instance is the best proof of their rarity. It would be hardly an exaggeration to say that though in the Mughul empire the Hindus out-numbered the Muhammadan in the ratio of hundred or fifty to one, in the public service the scale was just the reverse. Akbar for the first time adopted the liberal policy of appointing Hindus, but the Hindu element in State service during his reign did not exceed 15 per cent. As a matter of fact there were only 51 Hindu Mansabdars out of a total of 415.

[1] Dr. P. N. Chopra, *Society and Culture in Mughal Age*, p. 84.
[2] Dr. Yusuf Husain, *Glimpses of Medieval Indian Culture*, p. 125.
[3] Dr. M. L. Roy Choudhury, *The State* and *Religion in Mughal India*, p. 280.

"During the reign of Jahāngīr the reaction came in, only it was gradual and slow and not easily perceptible. William Hawkins (1608-13) accuses Jahangir of dismissing his Rajput generals and replacing them by Muslims which resulted in the loss of the dominions in the Deccan conquered by his father. Moreover, the foreign element in the Imperial Services lightly increased when Nur Jahān was at the helm of affairs.

"The period (1628-1707) is characterised by a strong orthodox reaction that brought into play narrow-mindedness, fanaticism, bigotry, intolerance and religious persecution. Shāh Jahān was in policy verily the father of Aurangzīb, and the growing conservatism and reaction definitely dates from his accession. But he was prudent enough not to risk his Empire for a Muslim's conscience, like his son. Aurangzīb's fond dream was to make India truly a *Dar-ul-Islam*, the land of the faithful. He felt extreme reluctance in admitting Hindus to his service and promoting them to any high post of trust as is evident from his own pen and instructions."[1]

Aurangzīb wrote to his son, Mohammad Azam, "Why do you recommend a Hindu to be appointed *vice* a Muslim, knowing it to be opposed to my wishes ?"[2]

When the prince (Bidar Bakht) was about to march from Malwa to Khandesh he proposed to leave Jai Singh there as his deputy governor, but Aurangzīb vetoed the proposal, as he had a rule that no Rajput should be appointed Sūbedār or even Faujdār.[3]

According to *Mirat-i-Alam* Hindu writers were entirely excluded from holding public offices. "In 1671 an ordinance was issued that the rent collectors of the crownlands must be Muslims, and all Viceroys and *tāluqdārs* were o dered to dismiss thei: Hindu head-clerks (*peshkārs*) and accountants (*diwanians*) and replace them by Muslims. It must be noted that the service in the revenue department provided daily bread to middle class Hindus able to read and w.ite. The official historian of the reign extols the measure: "By one stroke of the pen he (Aurangzīb) dismissed all the Hindu writers from his service",[4] *Maasir-i-Alamgiri*, text, p. 528. It was found impossible to run the administration after dismissing the Hindu *peskhkārs* of the provincial governors, but in some places Muslims replaced Hindu Kroris

[1] *Yasin*, pp. 45-6.
[2] Ibid, p. 46.
[3] Ibid, p. 47.
[4] Ibid, p. 47.

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(disrict rent-collectors). Later on, the Emperor yielded so far to necessity as to allow half of the *peshkārs* of the Revenue Minister's and Paymaster's departments to bé Hindus and the other half Muslims. Faruki's contention that Aurangzīb ordered the dismissal of Hindu clerks from revenue department and Paymaster's department because they were corrupt, 'thievish and very unpopular with soldiery and it was only an administrative expedient to appoint one Hindu and one Muslim side by side, does not hold water in the light of evident facts and the testimony of the croniclers of the time.[1]

Faruki, mentioned above, is one of the modern apologists of Aurangzīb, and has the hardihood to write: "The policy of non-discrimination between Hindus and Musalmans in the matter of employment was rigidly folloved by Aurangzib."[2] It is difficult to find a more glaring perversion of historical truth.

It is gratifying to note, however, that another Muslim writer, Dr. M.-Yasin, has justly characterised Faruki's remark as a piece of political propaganda to create an Almgirshāhī myth and distort history for a purpose neither pious nor politic. The same writer observes: "The apologist of Aurangzib, Zahiruddin Faruki, and other wishful Muslim writers of the present century have fruitlessly tried to glorify the good name of the Muslim sovereigns of Medieval India. Their main reliance is the testimony of Hamilton that "The religion of Bengal by law established is Mahometan, yet for one Mohometan there are above one hundred pagans, and the public offices and posts of trusts are filled promiscuously with men of both persuasions. (Hamilton, *A New Acount of East Indies*, II, 14). But the facts rebel against their pious enterprise. Bengal was an exception, having mostly low class Hindu converts incapable of filling any high office. At any rate one swallow does not make a weather." As against Hamilton he quotes Ovington, who says, "Very few of the Gentiles being called to any considerable Trust, or encouraged any more than just to follow their several Manual Occupations, or Merchandize. For Religion, which puts a bias upon the mind, entitled them (Muslims) to the Court favours, when it carries a confirmity to that of their Prince. Therefore the Gentiles are little esteemed by the Moors, and often treated with Inhumanity and neglect, because of their adhe ion to the Principles of a Religion which is different from that of the State."[3]

[1] Ibid.
[2] Zahiruddin Faruki, *Aurangzib and His Times*, p. 201.
[3] Yasin, pp. 44-6 (footnotes 2, 6).

Much has been made of the appointment of a large number of Rājput Generals by Auranzīb,. But this was partly a necessity and partly a matter of policy and a diplomatic stroke. But so deep-rooted was the antipathy between the Muslims and the Hindus that the soldiers of the two commeunities could not be placed under one general. Hence, in the first siege of Quandahar all the Rājputs of the Mughul van marched under Raja Bithal Das and all the Muslims under Bahādur Khān, two co-ordinate authorities subject only to the Commander-in-chief. In the Bijapur war also all the Rājputs of the reinforcements sent from Hindustan were led by Chatra Sāl Hāḍā, and all the Muslim troops by Mahabat Khān. It was only a commander standing in a position of unquestioned superiority above the heads of the other generals, that could make the two creeds work in amity. Generally speaking, the Muslims were against Hinduism but not against the Hindus. In private and daily life the Muslim grandees favoured the Hindu *Rājās* and nobles with their visits and joined freely in their festivals and ceremonies.

Bhimsen, the Hindu historian of Aurangzīb's reign, states that "On the festival of Holi (Spring festival of the Hindus), Bahādur Khān (Khān Jahān Bahādur Kotaltash) every day went to the houses of Raja Subban Singh, Rai Singh Rathor, Raja Anup Singh and Mokham Singh Chandrawat and watched the celebration ; and Mir Ahsan and Mir Muhsin, sons of the Khan, were more forward than Rājputs themselves. We gather from Akbarat of the reign of Aurangzīb that Hindu officers invited Muslims to break their fast (*iftar*) at the residence of the former."[1]

Hindu music exerted a great influence upon the Muslims. "Khusrau had a great genius for synthesis. He was the first Indo-Muslim to have thought of combining Persian nd Indian tunes and thus enriched Indian music. He is credited with having given shape to *Khayal* music by abandoning the *Dhrupad*. Khusrau is said to have invented a number of new melodies which represented the new Indo-Muslim culture." Khusrau also invented the *Sitar* by combining the old Indian *Vīṇā* and the Iranian *Tambura*. He is said to have modified the old *Mirdang* and to have given it the shape of the *Tablā*. Tān Sen completed the work initiated by Amīr Khusrau in the field of Indian music. He succeeded in evolving a fusion of the Hindu and the Iranian systems. Instead of the classical strains, he introduced light songs, just as Amir Khusrau had introduced the *Qawwali*. His popularity may be gauged from the fact that the melodies introduced by him were sung by the people of India everywhere (Ain-i-Akbari).[2]

[1] Ibid, p. 50.
[2] Yusuf Husain, op. cit., pp. 124-5.

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The Hindu painting also had some influences on the development of the Muslim art.

The Muslims also borrowed some elements of the Hindu architecture. At the beginning it was due to the necessity of employing local Hindu artisans who naturally followed the old tradition. Later, though the Muslim architecture developed on independent lines, Hindu architectural motifs occur even in the sacred edifices of the Muslims. Hindu influence may be traced in the Mihrab or the prayer niche in the tombs as well as in mosques in the Deccan, while Hindu jambs, spandrils and other architectural forms were freely used in Gujarat where, more than anywhere else, we find a blending of Hindu and Muslim building traditions. Some palaces of the 'Adil Shāhī dynasty in Bijapur had Hindu names such as Gagan Mahal, Satya Mahal, Jal Manzil, etc.

It is unnecessary to multiply such instances or to dwell upon them in detail. Such give and take is bound to take place between two communities living side by side for seven hundred years. But the main question is how far do they indicate any real change of heart of the Muslims, and any real improvement in their attitude towards the Hindus. This may be tested by a few concrete examples. We have just seen how Khusrau played an important role in assimilating Hindu and Muslim music and literature, and his love of India and everything Indian has been extolled by many writers as an evidence of Muslim appreciation of Hindu culture. Yet we have it on record, how eagerly he wished to exterminate the Hindus from the face of the earth.[1] Firuz Tughluk and Sikandar Lodi, during whose reigns Sanskrit

[1] The case of Amir Khusrav illustrates the depth of ignorance of the Hindus about the real feeling of the Muslims towards them. In 1953 the Hindus all over India vied with the Muslims in celebrating the seventh centenary of his birth and paying glowing tributes to his scholarship, liberality, humanity, etc. etc. Few perhaps knew, or remembered, and in any case cared to bring to public notice, the following passage in the well-known book *Ashika* of Khusrav, "The Parrot of Hind":

"The whole country (India), by means of the sword of our holy warriors, has become like a forest denuded of its thorns by fire. The land has been saturated with the water of the sword, and the vapours of infidelity have been dispersed. The strong men of Hind have heen trodden under foot, and all are ready to pay tribute. Islam is triumphant, idolatry is subdued. Had not the law granted exemption from death, by the payment of poll-tax, the very name of Hind, root and branch would have been extinguished. From Ghazni to the shore of the ocean you see all under the dominion of Islam". Alas for the Hindus. But for the benign Islamic law which allowed them to keep their head on their shoulder by payment of money. Amir Khusrav would have seen to it that no Hindu is left in Hindusthan. But then no Hindu would be there to join in the celebration of his seventh centenary and supply the people of the world in the 20th century an irrefutable evidence of the Hindu-Muslim fraternity or assimilation of the Hindu-Muslim cultures.

books were translated into Persian were extreme bigots and notorious for their cruel persecution of the Hindus. The same thing is true of the Bahmanī King Ahmad Shāh, one of the fiercest bigots who massacred thousands of Hindus. Many other instances of this kind may be cited.

A distinguished scholar in his study of the cltural synthesis in Medieval India traces its history back to Mahmud of Ghazni because he had a numerous body of Hindu troops under the command of a Hindu general and fully appreciated the excellence of Indian art. But he forgets to add that it was this Sultan who offered to the Indians the choice between sword and Islam, killed thousands if not lakhs of Hindus and destroyed all the best specimens of Hindu art in the shape of Hindu temples. Similarly Aurangzīb had probably the largest number of Hindu generals under his command, and yet he showed the greatest intolerance to the Hindus. The same writer has taken pains to describe in details the influence of Hindu architecture even on Muslim mosques and tombs in the Deccan. But the destruction of Hindu temples by the Muslim rulers clearly shows what little value is to be placed upon the "coalescence" or 'fusion' of Hindu-Muslim art as an indication of the Muslim appreciation of Hindu culture. The same writer cites, as an evidence of the assimilation of Hindu and Muslim culture, a distinct influence of the Hindu motifs in the Quwwatul-Islam mosque at Delhi. But he forgets to add that this very mosque was built by the materials of twenty-one Hindu temples destroyed by the Muslim ruler. Not only distinct influence of the Hindu motifs but actual pillars and sculptures of the Hindu temples, ruthlessly destroyed by the Muslims, are still to be seen in the structure of the mosque. These ruins do not proclaim the 'assimilation' or 'ccalescence' of the two cultures but deliberate destruction of the one by the other. They also prove the lack of appreciation of Hindu art and culture on the part of Muslims from the very beginning.[1]

[1] *Journal of Indian History*, Vol. XLI, p. 240.

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The inter-marriage between the two communities has been suggested as a test of Muslim appreciation of Hindu Culture and a means ofincreasing the cordiality betwen the two. But Fīruz Tughluq and Sikandar Lodi, born of Hindu mothers, were the worst bigots and most uncompromising opponents of Hinduism. The same thing is true of Fīruz of the Bahmanī dynasty who married two Hindu ladies. The two *Qāzīs* who inflicted terrible misery on the Hindus in Bengal as mentioned in the *Manasā-maṅgala* of Vijayagupta were also born of a Hindu mother. Mahātmā Gandhi denounced Jinnah's theory of two nations on the ground that the Indian Muslims, save a microscopie minority, were all descended from Hindus. But apart from these examples there are historical instances that some of the Hindu converts to Islam were the greatest bigots and inflicted the greatest misery on the Hindus. Reference may be made to Suhabhaṭṭa of Kashmir and Kalapahar in Bengal.

It is to be seriously considered whether in view of all this the so-called assimilation of Hindu and Muslim cultures, based on contact at many points mentioned above, may be regarded as having modified the fundamental Islamic outlook on the Hindus in a Muslim State.

The question may be looked at from another point of view. How far did the so-called assimilation on these minor points touch the real culture of the Hindus and Muslims. A recent writer, Yusuff Husain, after describing the assimilation, justly observes: "Although there were many points of contact between Hindus and Muslims on the higher as well as on the lower levels, their life currents flowed separately. Historically we have to admit that Indian society in medieval times was distinctly divided between the Hindus and the Muslims, whose spiritual sources of inspiration were different, although on the material and outwardly plane they had many things in common. The Sufis and the Bhagats attempted to bring them closer spiritually, but they succeeded only partially. They supplied a very useful leaven to the culture of medieval times,"[1] The fact remains that in spite of elements borrowed from the Hindus the Muslim art, literature, and society remained quite distinct from those of the Hindus. This is the real crux of the whole problem. Any one who carefully considers the facts culled above, without any prejudice or preconceived notion of any kind, would perhaps readily agree with this view. The points of contact on which the assimilation of Hindu and Muslim cultures is based really touch only the fringe of each

[1] Yusuf Husain, op. cit., p. 126.

culture without affecting the essentials in any way, and one can hardly dispute the fact that the Hindus and Muslims exhibited two distinct types of culture and formed two separate religious, political and social units throughout the Medieval Age in India.

In every age and in every land the people look upon some aspects of life as vital and essential to which every thing else is subordinate. In modern times the idea of political freedom holds that place of honour. But in the Medieval age, it was religion that was regarded as the vital point in the cultural life by the Hindus as well as by the Muslims. Urged by their own religious principles the Muslims regarded it as their solemn duty to spread Islam at the expense of Hinduism. The means adopted were to demolish temples and idols of the Hindus, treat them as *Zimmis* with all the humiliations of that category of subject people, and to convert them not by missionary propaganda as by terrorisation and temptation. This theory was carried into practice by the first Muslim conqueror Muhammad Ibn Qāsim in 712 A.D. and by a long succession of Muslim rulers down to the time of Aurangzīb who died in 1707 and Alivardi who died in 1756, and practised the theory to an extent even beyond the furthest limits set down by the Islamic principle. What is more important for our present purpose is the undeniable fact that the Muslim community as a whole had —and still has—greater veneration and respect for the types represented by Fīrūz Tughluq, Sikandar Lodi and Aurangzīb and denounced the few Muslims like Akbar and Dārā Shukoh who adopted a more liberal attitude. This shows that the anti-Hindu attitude was not the policy of an individual ruler but of the community as a whole. Nobody need condemn the Muslims for this, for they were as devoted to their own religion as the Hindus and wholeheartedly followed the dictates of religion without any question or humane considerations. This religious bigotry was met by the equally obstinate social bigotry of the Hindus. Although the two communities lived together for a thousand years the Muslims did not imbibe in the least the ideas of religious toleration from the Hindus, and the caste-ridden Hindus never learnt the democratic social ideas from the Muslims. None budged an inch from the position each occupied at the very beginning. This is the real tragedy that kept the two communities as two separate entities even after they had lived together for 700 years. The Hindus who found their temples destroyed and divine images broken by the Muslims would find little interest in their literature, music, arts and various rites, customs and festivities. And they were right. For as shown above, these minor

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things did not prove that the Muslims had any real regard for the Hindus or what they looked upon as the real core of their culture. Referring to the Hindus and Muslims, living side by side in India, a distinguished scholar has concluded that Medieval India furnished not only the most vivid example of coexistence and toleration but an instance of coalescence in every thing save religion.[1] Even if this were true, the single element, namely, intolerance and persecution of Hindu religion took away the value of the rest, and this is proved by the fact that "that one exception has succeeded in keeping the Hindus and Muslims as two distinct units for 1000 years." For religion in that age comprised not only social and moral, but almost every aspect of life that was regarded as of any real value. The same writer traces "a definite movement of give and take between the two great cultures since the establishment of the Sultanat of Delhi." Reference has been made above to the 'give and take' in respect of various aspects of life, but all these ceased to have any meaning or value in the face of the one great 'give and take' viz. give me your head or take my religion'. There was no doubt coalescence in the sense of 'coming together and form one', for the Hindus in large numbers entered into the fold of Islam and became completely one with the Muslims, but then they ceased to be Hindus and there was no question of Hindu-Muslim coalescence in the ordinary sense of the term.

It is not my object to apportion praise or blame between the two communities, but merely to state the facts and explain them on the basis of extreme and sincere devotion to religion. We must face the historical facts fairly and squarely, and not ignore them for temporary convenience. As an example of how politics obscured the vision and judgment of great men, even of some great Hindu leaders, I may refer to the views expressed by one of them to the effect that "the Hindus and Muslims have coalesced into an Indian people very much in the same way as the Angles, Saxons, Jutes, Danes and Normans formed the English people of today."[2] But they conveniently forget that within a century or two of the Norman conquest nobody in Britain could find out who belonged to any one of these groups; but the Muslims, who settled in India long before the Norman conquest, can easily be distinguished from the Hindus even today.

Alberuni expressed the opposite view in the tenth century when he said that "the Hindus totally differ from us in religion, as we believe in

[1] *JIH*, Vol. XLI, p. 241. [2] Lajpat Rai, in *Young India*.

nothing in which they believe and *vice versa*."[1] The passage in which he elaborates the idea has been already quoted. Whether, and if so how far, the situation has changed during the last thousand years may be judged from the following statement of a Muslim student, who first conceived the idea of Pakistan in the twentieth century. "Our religion, culture, history, tradition, literature, economic system, laws of inheritance, succession and marriage are fundamentally different from those of the Hindus. These differences are not confined to the broad basic principles. They extend to the minute details of our lives. We, Muslims and Hindus, do not interdine; we do not intermarry. Our national customs and calendars, even our diet and dress, are different."[2] Whether the views of Hindu porlitical leaders and of the scholars, both Hindu and Muslim, who have tried to prove the coalescence or synthesis of Hindu and Muslim cultures are more in consonance with historical facts than those of Alberuni in the 11th and the young Muslim student in the 20th century. I leave the readers to judge for themselves in the light of the broad facts I have stated above. The answer to this question will be the really decisive factor in judging of the Muslim view of Hindu Culture in its true perspective.

[1] Alberuni, p. 19.

[2] The statement was made in an interview with Madam Halide Edib, who visited India in 1935 and recorded it in her book *Inside India*, published in 1937.

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